

FONTastic Plus released!

ALTSYS
CORPORATION

Newsletter #2



The FONTastic Plus staff relaxing after the big release.

FONTastic Plus

At long last, it started shipping last month. Thanks to implementing a lot of good suggestions people have given to us over the years, we think this is the best bitmap font editor available.

A flyer is enclosed with this newsletter, so we won't go into a lot of detail on the changes from FONTastic. People's response has been excellent, especially those who are using the variable-size fatbits to edit large characters. Instant print samples are also greatly appreciated, and the bit-level cut, paste, move, flip, and rotate almost makes us sorry we limited FONTastic so it could run on a 128K system.

FONTastic Plus, needless to say, requires at least a 512K system. The

program alone is over 170K, and supporting four levels of Undo/Redo and a background editing plane chews up memory in a hurry. Making full use of the metrics window, which allows setting fractional character widths and kerning pairs, requires a Mac Plus, 512K enhanced, SE, or Mac II (i.e. new ROMs). Of course, FONTastic Plus runs on the SE and II.

Upgrades to FONTastic Plus are available for FONTastic and Fontographer customers. To registered owners, the cost is \$30.00 plus \$5.00 shipping and handling in the U.S. and Canada. If outside North America, please add \$5.00 more for air-mail shipping. All funds must be in U.S. dollars

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Company news

Welcome to our second occasional newsletter. So many people have been calling about FONTastic Plus and our new line of fonts that we felt this newsletter was the best way to tell everyone what is happening at Altsys.

Our early customers may notice that we have moved. The phone company gave us a new phone number, too. Last year we outgrew our first office and had to move across town in order to have enough space for new people and an expanded warehouse. In that year, we have doubled our staff, upgraded Fontographer, developed FONTastic Plus, started publishing two lines of fonts (bitmap and PostScript), and made consid-

erable progress toward completing a new drawing program that will establish a new Macintosh standard.

All this, and we were still able to give what a lot of people tell us is the best customer support in the business. Not too shabby for a two-year old.

This newsletter is going out to our customers, dealers, and a lot of you who have just asked for information. If you are just an information collector, this may be your last letter from us, since future mailings will only go to people who have returned their warranty cards. You should be sure to send in the warranty cards from your purchases just to get one of these chatty newsletters once in a while...

Fontographer

Astounding! Some people have still not heard about our PostScript font editor. Well, now you know it exists. Object-oriented drawing tools allow you to draw straight lines and Bezier curves and generate an automatically downloadable PostScript font file. We think everybody creating Macintosh fonts uses it, except for Adobe, who wrote their own font editor for the Sun workstation (back in the days when the Mac screen was not big enough for "serious" work). Priced at

\$395.00, Fontographer is a little less expensive than the \$150,000 Icarus systems used by the top 40 type design firms in the world, but we think our customers can demonstrate that good things can come in small packages. For typeface or logo development, Fontographer is the tool of choice on the Mac.

Last fall we released the 2.0 version, which allows using the built-in LaserWriter fonts (or any downloadable font) as composites. With 2.0, you

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(drawn on a U.S. bank so our bank knows how to cash it) or you may pay via credit card.

If you have never returned your warranty card, or don't remember if you have, you can return your original disk as proof of ownership.

We highly recommend this upgrade, since it looks like Apple may be making some changes to their System file which breaks everything written in the particular C compiler we used for FONTastic. This change (for International Script sup-

port) already has been made on the Mac II, and as a result, none of our older programs runs properly on the II. We have written FONTastic Plus in Lightspeed C, which works fine on the Mac II.

The first release of FONTastic Plus had a few obscure problems; accordingly we are providing free updates for our early customers. Simply return your master disk (you will have to pay \$0.39 postage in the U.S.), and we will update it to version 1.2 at no cost.

FONTastic still popular

People are still buying it, and we're not dumb enough to stop making what people want to buy, but we really recommend FONTastic Plus for new purchases. It does three times as much (measured by code size, anyway), and only costs \$30.00 more.

FONTastic is currently at revision 2.7.1, where it will stay. It has been remarkably stable over the last year, with only two minor bugs reported. Neither will be fixed, but both people got

a free upgrade to FONTastic Plus for telling us about the bugs.

As mentioned above, we suspect Apple is about to break FONTastic by releasing a new System file which assigns a new meaning to a crucial low-memory location used by the old C compiler. If you have FONTastic and do not want to upgrade, we suggest using the current version of the System (3.2) and Finder (5.3) while editing fonts.

The inevitable trademark list

Why is this industry so concerned with trademarks that we list everybody's in everything we do? I don't know, but I'm not taking any chances. In any case, there was this blank space to fill, so here we go:

FONTastic and Fontographer are trademarks of Altsys Corp. Macintosh, LaserWriter, and ImageWriter are trademarks of Apple Computer, Inc. PostScript and Illustrator are trademarks of Adobe Systems, Inc. CricketDraw is a trademark of Cricket Software. Lightspeed C is a trademark of Think Technology, Inc.

The Family Builder...

Altsys uses it. Casady-Ware uses it. Anybody making a related family of fonts can now use it too. We developed the family builder as a "simple" little program to collect styled variants of a font into one complex entity. For example, you may wish to hand-tune Roman, Bold, Italic, and Bold Italic styles for your font. Before the family builder, you would have to install four fonts, and change styles by selecting the appropriate font. With the family builder, you can put all four variants under one menu item, and change styles simply by using the Style menu. This is how most LaserWriter fonts work, and the magic is now available from Altsys.

This program is not meant for general use, since we don't think everybody needs or wants to do this. We have set the price at \$100.00, including shipping. Those who need it are getting a tremendous bargain. Those of you who don't need it won't be tempted to buy it and ask us \$200.00 worth of questions about it. It was developed primarily for internal use,

but it proved to be so popular we decided to make it available to everyone who needed it. Be aware that it works for us, but is not as tested as most of our software. Check your first few families suspiciously.

If you get it, you can make hidden fonts out of the styled variants, so font menus do not get cluttered with unnecessary entries. It also can create Apple's new NFNT resource, which solves the font numbering problem. Or will solve the numbering problem, as soon as the Font/DA Mover supports NFNT's so you can install them without having to delve into the woolly nether-regions of ResEdit.

Family building is a relatively simple process, taking only about 5 minutes per font. When buying this program, you are paying for our lengthy learning process, accumulated expertise, an in-depth user's guide, and a few thousand lines of highly complex code. If you need it, now you can get it.

A product to watch for

We can't resist a plug for a future product. It is still technically "vaporware" at this point, since only four people even have alpha copies.

The great reception we got for Fontographer convinced us to develop an advanced drawing package for full-page illustration. This has been under development for nine months now, and is getting close to beta-test release (we have testers).

We aren't ready to talk about the details yet, but watch for us at the Boston MacWorld show in August. If you are a professional graphic designer who needs to do high-quality color illustration, or print perfect color separations on the Linotype, you need this package. Yes, we know about Illustrator and CricketDraw. They are good at what they do. This is better for what you do.

Fontographer (continued from page 1)

can automatically make a font which is a clone of Times or Helvetica, but which allows you to shuffle characters around, add your logo, add new characters, or add fractions, for just a few examples. It also allows you to pluck a few letters from those fonts and use them in your own logos. Or you may want to generate a gray, outlined Palatino that is slightly condensed horizontally. Such composites do not even require drawing ability, since they simply call on the built-in fonts. This makes them quite compact, as well as simple to produce.

Fontographer also can be used to semi-automatically generate a range of bitmap font sizes. Use Fontographer to draw each letter outline once, then generate bitmaps in up to 12 different sizes. Note that bitmaps smaller than 36 point will need hand editing for best appearance, but the initial proportions and basic line weights can be generated automatically by Fontographer.

The current version of Fontographer is 2.2.1. A few bugs have been fixed; some of which should be pointed out to everyone. There are two potentially serious problems in previous releases 2.0 and 2.1.

The first problem is that composites do not work on font names greater than 20 characters long, such as NewCenturySchoolbook-Roman. The symptom of this problem is that Fontographer generates bad PostScript which does not print.

The second problem is a nasty one which crept in after most testing was completed. Generating a

partial bitmap by selecting a character or range of characters does not work as documented. The user's manual recommends this technique to regenerate just those bitmap characters which have had their outlines changed. Unfortunately, Fontographer does not regenerate a full width table for every character in this case. If you are using a version older than 2.2.1, always select character 255 and regenerate the bitmap fonts one final time after performing all other updates. The problem is fixed in version 2.2.1. Symptoms of this problem are letters piling on top of one another in PageMaker 2.0 or other new software which uses fractional width tables. We had not noticed this problem initially, since no software which used the fractional width tables was available then.

We will update your Fontographer master to version 2.2.1 for \$30.00, but do not recommend the upgrade at this time unless you really need it. Version 2.3 is due out by mid-May. This will generate even better PostScript, and will make composite fonts compatible with Apple's new printer driver. (Yes, the driver is being changed again, and naturally it will be incompatible with our existing composite fonts). The new version of Fontographer also runs on the Mac II. Upgrades to the new version are \$30.00, and should be available in late May. This new version also makes composite fonts which can be printed from PageMaker or ported to the IBM PC without a struggle.

Free customer support

The old offer we made when we started Altsys still stands for all our software; be the first to tell us about a bug, and we'll give you a free upgrade to the version that fixes that bug. And here's a new offer; be the first to suggest a great new feature that we implement, and we'll send you that upgrade free. Note the "that we implement" clause. We choose the features that we implement very carefully, and do not put in a feature just because it seems like a "neat idea." It must be generally useful, straightforward to use, and easy to understand. Things such as variable-size fat-bits in FONTastic Plus easily qualify, even though they were a serious implementation problem. If it is a good idea, we aren't too worried about how hard it is to program, as long as we can figure out how to program it.

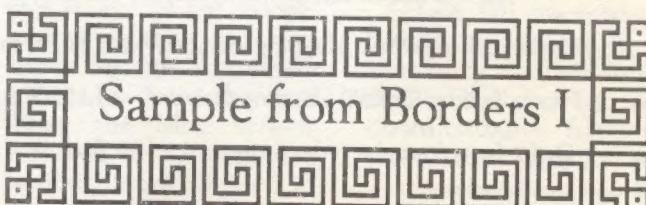
As you can see by the prices for upgrades listed here and there in this newsletter, there are no more free upgrades (apart from the above offers). The plague of \$8000.00 per page magazine ads is now upon us, and free upgrades are a casualty of this increased advertising expense.

It's too bad we have to let it come to this, but as our customer base grows, our mail seems to be getting harder and harder to keep up with. If you write a letter or a note on the warranty card to give us a

suggestion or tell us about a problem, we probably will not send a personal answer due to the volume of mail we get. We will keep your letter on file and reward you when the new version is released. Jim Von Ehr, our president, reads every warranty card comment, and reads most letters. He can't answer every one, and is remarkably slow in answering the ones he does respond to, but he does file the interesting ones away, and frequently refers to them when planning new releases.

This lamentable lack of personal response doesn't apply to cases where people are stopped by a problem and we ask them to send in a disk. If you are stopped by a font problem, we consider it a serious situation and devote ourselves to finding a way around it. Fortunately, only a few problems have actually been our bugs; most problems seem to be improper font installation, old system software, or some other program which does not handle fonts properly.

Even so, we take our customer support obligations seriously, and try to help you over the rough spots of new printer drivers, etc. We appreciate that relatively few people abuse this by asking us for answers that are in the User's Guide. Please keep it up, so we can maintain our free support policy!



Sample from Borders I

Font announcements

As you can see from the enclosed font flyer, we are now publishing two lines of fonts.

Those of you who don't want to sell your car so you can buy a LaserWriter have the option of buying some of our bitmap fonts for your ImageWriter instead. Bill Layman's Power fonts are our big seller to date; probably to power users who need the math and engineering symbols. Doug Miles sent us a fine disk of fonts that we couldn't wait to publish. Shortly afterwards, we received several disks of foreign language and math symbols which we consolidated into two

disks. Then Richard Roberts showed us what he had been doing for the last year (apparently to the exclusion of everything else), and we had three more disks of bitmap fonts. We think these bitmap fonts range from good to amazing, and would be pleased to be shown that bitmap font sales are not yet dead. Our font submitters would be pleased to receive some royalties too. All we need are customers.

Those of you who got your company or rich uncle to buy a LaserWriter should have a look at our PostScript typeface li-

brary. Judy Sutcliffe's artistic Goudy Newstyle and Goudy Oldstyle are reconstructions of the actual faces carved by Frederic Goudy. Richard Beatty's prolific design studio has produced four (five, as of this afternoon) decorative border fonts; some based on the work of Richard Mitchell, who recreated several antique decorative

borders for his *Underground Grammarians*. In addition, Richard Beatty has completed historical reconstructions of the well-known Cooper face, an art-nouveau face of the late 19th century called Venezia, and two original faces; BlackSanSerif and PenStroke.

Look for many more fonts in the near future.

Font Royalties

We pay highly competitive royalties on user-developed fonts. If you have a well-done typeface you would like to have published, send a print sample. We will contact you about terms. If your typeface is a copy of a commercial font, we may have to pay royalties to the original typeface designer, which will reduce your royalty percentage. We do not encourage typeface piracy.

Order form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Country _____ Phone _____

Check MasterCard VISA Card number_____

Expiration date _____ Signature _____

FONTastic Plus upgrade (\$30.00 plus \$5.00 shipping—add \$10.00 for foreign airmail)
FONTastic serial number _____

(You must return your master FONTastic disk if your registration card is not on file, or we will return this order)

FONTastic Plus (\$79.95, shipping included—add \$5.00 for foreign airmail)

Fontographer 2.3 update (\$30.00, shipping included—add \$5.00 for foreign airmail)
Fontographer serial number _____

(You must return your master Fontographer disk if your registration card is not on file, or we will return this order)

Fontographer (\$395.00, shipping included—add \$10.00 for foreign airmail)

Family Builder (\$100.00, shipping included—add \$5.00 for foreign airmail)

Order fonts from the order form on the font flyer.

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